

Recommendations of the Interlibrary Loan Study Committee

The loaning of items among libraries, interlibrary loan (ILL), continues to be a valuable way for Montanans to receive important information. Although requests for reimbursements for ILLs have decreased over the past five years, due to the availability of on-line information, ILL remains an important part of Montana's information infrastructure and the State Library will continue to support this exchange. Without the reimbursement program, some libraries would have to charge other Montana libraries for the use of their material, thereby, limiting citizen access to information.

In addition, the State Library has an important role to play augmenting information resources for all citizens. During the past three years, the Governor and Legislators have allocated funding to purchase full-text periodical databases, thereby helping to ensure equal access to information for all citizens. The availability of these databases has helped to decrease the amount of loans among libraries.

After extensive study and discussion, the members of the ILL Study Committee make the following recommendations to the Networking Task Force and the Montana State Library Commission.

Recommendation 1. The interlibrary loan program should continue to value the contributions of every library.

Each loan made between libraries in Montana is equally valuable regardless of which library lends the item or how many items are loaned by a particular library. Every library that loans an item should continue to receive financial support.

Recommendation 2. Modify the interlibrary loan program so that those libraries that lend more than they borrow are rewarded.

Libraries that loan more than they borrow, or net-lenders, make exceptional contributions to the stream of resources shared between libraries. Therefore, the committee proposes that the state recognize these extra efforts by adjusting the program's formula and offer 50% additional benefit for each item loaned in excess of items borrowed.

Recommendation 3. The state library should promote program participation.

The committee believes that the health of the ILL system can only be maintained if many libraries participate. They urge the state library to promote participation through its regular publicity efforts. The committee also believes that the system works best when all participants follow best practices, and, therefore, urges the state library to maintain training for all library staff.

Recommendation 4: The Commission should support the purchase of electronic resources to insure that all Montana citizens have equal opportunity.

The committee asks the commission to use \$100,000 of the \$300,000 available for the program to purchase electronic resources. Expanded access to shared information resources could include a small component for a one-time enhancement

of interlibrary loan services and document delivery (i.e. software or hardware necessary for electronic resource use).

The committee recognizes that local libraries have a responsibility to fund resources, and asks that the commission adjust the cost share of libraries to reflect the value of additional electronic resources. The committee also suggests that the commission ask Governor Martz to support an additional \$100,000 from the Coal Severance Tax to fund electronic resources that will contribute to the economic well-being and development of Montana's communities and citizens.

The committee believes that Montana citizens will benefit from these changes. Citizens will have more information available because their local libraries can borrow items from any Montana library and also have more information available at their own libraries. The increase in funding will purchase important information resources, including indexes for newspapers, sophisticated business information, and in-depth health resources. These resources can be accessed and used by every citizen of Montana.

The committee understands that these recommendations require changes in the ILL program, but believe that the changes will benefit libraries and their users. Although some libraries may receive smaller amounts from the reimbursement program, the committee trusts that libraries will see that access to more information resources to meet the needs of their users will counterweigh this change. The committee believes that reallocating scarce resources to increase information, while continuing to support the loans of items between libraries, is a sensible and cost-effective proposal. The committee believes that all libraries and all the people of Montana will benefit from these changes.